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ABSTRACT

The study reported here is part of a larger project which provides baseline data on local school district evaluation offices: their organization, financing, personnel, activities and relationships to other district functions. This analysis explores the relationship of the characteristics of the context in which an evaluation takes place, such as community environment, resources, and organization characteristics, to an evaluation unit's involvement in instructional renewal. The major emphasis is on variables over which the district or evaluation unit has some control, so that the results can be of practical use in improving educational evaluation. A few additional variables, which could be considered potential constraints, have been included because of their prevalence in the literature on educational organizations. This paper is a first attempt to investigate what factors are associated with the level of a unit's direct participation in the instructional change process; coordinated work focuses specifically on units with particularly high levels of instructional involvement. These combined results are potentially useful in expanding the meager data about school district evaluation offices and their ability to influence instruction. (Author/GK)

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STUDIES IN EVALUATION AND DECISION MAKING

Work Unit 1

Evaluation and Decision Making in School Districts

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EVALUATION OFFICES AND INSTRUCTIONAL RENEWAL

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Evaluation Offices and Instructional Renewal

(Revised Version)

In this Proposition 13 era of budget controls, public or governmental agencies are being called on to justify their expenditures and sometimes their very existence. This may increase the importance of evaluation in planning, modifying or terminating government social programs. (see, for example, Hearings on the Cost, Management and Utilization of Human Resources Program Evaluations); in fact, "Congress has mandated that evaluation shall be an integral part of almost every federally supported social action program..." (Guba, 1978, p. 1). Thus there is likely to be more general calls for evaluation to assess the effectiveness of educational programs, and the ability of school districts to adjust to an extraordinary period of growth (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978).

Simultaneously, however, there may be close scrutiny of specific evaluation practices. Response to calls for improvements in evaluation methodology have thus far focussed primarily on prescriptive models (e.g., Stufflebeam, 1971; Provus, 1971) and commitments (e.g., Stake, 1967; Cronbach, 1963). But these have occurred in the absence of data on how school district evaluation offices currently function.

The study reported here is part of a larger project which provides baseline data on local school district evaluation offices: their organization, financing, personnel, activities and relationships to other district functions (Lyon et al, 1978). This analysis explores the relationship of the characteristics of the context in which an evaluation takes place, such as community environment, resources and organization characteristics,

to an evaluation unit's involvement in instructional renewal.* The major emphasis is on variables over which the district or evaluation units has some control, so that the results can be of practical use in improving educational evaluation. A few additional variables, which could be considered potential constraints, have been included because of their prevalence in the literature on educational organizations.

This paper is a first attempt to investigate what factors are associated with the level of a unit's direct participation in the instructional change process; coordinated work focuses specifically on units with particularly high levels of instructional involvement. These combined results should be useful in expanding the meager data about school district evaluation offices and their ability to influence instruction.

There is agreement among educators, both practitioners and theorists, that instructional renewal is a major purpose of evaluation. Former Assistant Commissioner of Education Mood (1976) thinks that "the primary purpose of educational evaluation is improvement of educational programs" (p. 28). Stufflebeam (1971) suggests that the purpose of evaluation is not to prove but to improve. Thus "the need for evaluation occurs in an atmosphere of planned change" (Suchman, p. 56) requiring the evaluator to be "as much a change agent as he is an assessor" (Guba, in Provus, 1971, p. 107).

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*The focus of this analysis is on activities and characteristics of centralized evaluation offices in school districts, that is, units or offices which hold the formal organization responsibility for evaluation. Although centralization is not the only way of organizing the evaluation function, it is a common way among larger districts. Three-hundred and twenty of the 750 districts in the U.S. with 10,000 or more students report central evaluation offices; these units are located in districts enrolling approximately 1/3 of all students in U.S. public schools. Further analysis by Lyon et al includes exploring alternative ways of organizing the evaluation function.

Yet, such attention to instructional renewal must take place within school organizations which, according to John Meyer (1977), are typically decoupled from the technical work of instruction.

Some might argue that the usual administrative conduct of evaluation, largely confined to reporting test results and categorizing students means that evaluation is already involved in instructional renewal. This is not our position. Instead, we define a school district evaluation office involved in improving instruction as requiring some or all of the following characteristics which go beyond the narrower administrative function: directly observes the instructional process; participates in identifying goals, selecting programs or materials, checking program implementation, modifying programs; spends a large proportion of its time serving teachers and principals, who, in turn, use data generated by the unit.

If one turns to the education evaluation literature for guidance on how instruction-focused evaluation can be accomplished, one finds models for the evaluation process itself, research on measurement and methods, and examples of evaluations. Little information is available, however, about the characteristics of the environment in which these activities actually take place. While sociological research about communities and organization exists, it does not appear to be interpreted into discussions of school district evaluation unit functioning.

However, the community context is recognized as a potential influence on various aspects of the educational process. "Interest in evaluation research is likely to be greatest among groups predisposed toward gradual and moderate change. Where change is thought to be undesirable or impossible, little interest in evaluation is to be expected" (Caro, p. 9).

Superintendents recognize that the community, particularly in terms of the political atmosphere, strongly influences school policies (Cuban, 1976). Socioeconomic status (SES), measured by income, education or occupational status, is commonly included in studies of educational achievement or social processes involving education (for example, Sewall et al). Evaluators, too, recognize the importance of the community (see, for example, Patton, 1978; Weiss, 1973). However, with the exception of SES effects on achievement, specific relationships are not usually discussed.

The organization and school consolidation literature suggests potential effects of organizational size, but contain no consistent descriptions of the nature of these relationships. Size may affect organizational structure (Blau, 1972), managerial practwces (Mahoney et al, 1972) and the morale and stress of people working in an organization (Kahn et al, 1964). "It has long been argued that consolidation improves the quality of education" (Sher, 1977); yet, research does not consistently support such a conclusion. Although not specifically mentioning district size, Meyer (1977) reports that school districts, in spite of wide size variation, exhibit a high degree of organizational similarity, particularly in their lack of emphasis on instructional policies.

Inadequate resources are often cited by school district evaluation unit heads limiting the effectiveness of their offices. Half of heads of school district evaluation offices reported inadequate financing, 64 percent claim they have too few staff; and 35 percent rank "more professional staff as the most important way of increasing their unit's effectiveness (Lyon et al, 1978). Ninety-seven percent report allocations of one percent or less of their total school systems' budgets, to evaluation activities, this

is far less than the seven percent in larger districts and 15-20 percent in smaller districts recommended by Stufflebeam (1971). In determining the impact of evaluation activities, at least as currently defined it may be that expenditures beyond a minimal level have decreasing utility. This may be similar to the phenomenon observed in student achievement, where "social scientists claim that beyond some minimum per pupil expenditure level, there is little or no statistical relationship between dollars spent per pupil and student performance on achievement tests" (McDermott, 1976, p. 169). Also, Lieberman (1977) cites the availability of resources as important to processes of educational change but caution that "...the way schools think about their use may be as important as the actual resources themselves" (p. 169).

Although the literature on educational organizations has not specifically considered the role of or placement of program evaluation units within educational institutions, recent work in the general area of evaluation argues that the administrative location of an evaluation unit has consequences for the kind and quality of results produced (Weiss, 1973). Caro (1977) reports that an "evaluator's prestige and power are considered to be positively related to the likelihood that his findings will be implemented" (p. 21). The power and prestige of a school district evaluation unit may be indicated by such things as the distance from the superintendent in the organizational structure and the role of the unit in decision-related activities. That proximity to the superintendent may be an important factor is supported by Wholey et al (1969) who recommended that (at least for external evaluators) evaluators, assessing overall program success, should be responsible to the highest policy-maker. However, these authors also suggest that

evaluations of alternative strategies within a program are more appropriately directed to the program director. The Instructional or Curriculum Division also plays an important role in instruction-related decisions; if the evaluation office is located within this department, this increases formal proximity of evaluators to practitioners affected by evaluations.

Informal organizational factors, such as role conflict and ambiguity, may have dysfunctional effects on job performance. If an evaluator lacks adequate role-relevant information (for example, with restricted or ambiguous information about role expectation), he or she may experience "role ambiguity." Studies have associated role ambiguity with tension, fear, anxiety, hostility, job dissatisfaction (Gross et al., 1958); Weiss (1973) reports that uncertainty about an evaluator's role and an evaluation's purpose could result in lack of functional clarity and thus could consequently lessen the unit's opportunity to provide useful information. Ambiguity, however, may have a positive effect in that an evaluation unit director may be able to institute needed responses or new practices before clear cut, and sometimes limiting, organizational boundaries have been established.

"Role conflict" can occur when evaluators face incompatible expectations (Rogers and Molnar, 1976)," and is also associated with decreased job satisfaction, increased stress and anxiety. This option results in coping behavior that is detrimental to the organization (Rizzo et al., 1970).

Other possibly relevant organizational factors include the evaluation unit head or staffs' training and experience. The typical upward mobility path for school district administrators begins with classroom teaching. While evaluation is one of the few areas in a school system where non-certificated professionals are found, more than half of the evaluation

office heads have been teachers (Lyon et al., 1978). This practice is based, in part, on the assumption that previous classroom teaching is necessary before one can understand problems from a teacher's perspective. However, Sieber (1976) reported that "...although all of the (educational change) agents naturally drifted toward clients who occupied the positions they themselves had formerly held, they tended to have greater impact with other clients" (p. 45).

Evaluators are also cautioned to consider the "personal factor" (for example, Patton, 1978). Fieldwork in selected school districts (Lyon et al.) suggests that leadership qualities and other skills of the superintendent, evaluation office head, and evaluation staff affect the unit's functioning and focus. Establishing relationships between evaluators and administrators or practitioners is recommended, for example, by Weiss (1973), Caro (1977), Rodman and Kolodne, (1964). Such personal factors are, however, difficult to quantify and have not been included in this analysis because data are not available.

In summary, characteristics of both the district evaluation unit and and staff and the school district in which the evaluation unit is embedded may have an impact on the level of the evaluation unit's impact on instructional renewal. In the following sections we will utilize qualitative policy analysis techniques to examine which, if any, of these characteristics are related to instructional renewal.

Methods

The sample used for this analysis includes 135 of the 230 school district evaluation offices who responded to a field survey (Lyon et al., 1978). Questionnaires were sent to heads of all centralized evaluation offices in school districts with 10,000 or more students. The ten-page survey contained questions (most of which utilized a closed format, requiring check marks or ranking) covering the following topics: unit

organization, financing, personnel characteristics, activities, relationships to other district units, personnel, and school district characteristics. The survey received a 72 percent response rate. Additional data were obtained from district organization charts sent by survey respondents along with the questionnaire; census data (1970) provided an indicator of the socio-economic level of the community served by the school district.

The analysis sample of 135 districts is a subset of the survey respondents. It includes all districts which were not excluded because their resource measures (evaluation budget, budget per pupil, and number of staff) were more than three standard deviations from the mean* or missing data on one or more variables. A comparison of the 135 district analysis with those excluded for the above reasons revealed no significant differences on either the dependent or any of the independent variables.

The sample includes districts with enrollments ranging from 10,000 to over one million and evaluation office budgets of $10,000 to $1,500,000. It provides a cross-section of districts in the U.S. in terms of ethnicity (a range of 0-98% black) or SES (3-44% of families with incomes less than $5,000; 0-39% of families with incomes $25,000 or more).

Regression analysis is used to explore the relationship of direct involvement of the evaluation unit in instructional renewal to a group of contextual-type variables representing community characteristics, unit resources, and formal and informal organizational factors. The specific variables are described below.

The dependent variable is an approximate indicator of the direct involvement of the evaluation office in instructional renewal. It was formed by

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*Such outliers may provide valuable information, particularly through further survey work and field visits, but may bias results of the current study which focuses on describing "typical" relationships.

summing values for ten dichotomous variables, including participating in identifying goals, selecting programs or materials, checking implementation, modifying programs and amount of service to teachers and principals and their use of evaluation office data.* (See Table 1.)

Independent variables were chosen to cover as many as possible of the topics suggested by the literature and by practitioners, within practical constraints, such as availability of data and parsimony. They are not meant to be an exhaustive set of variables, but rather a minimum set or nucleus of potentially related characteristics.

Community context. The community context in which the district operates is represented by two SES variables. 1. "Percent of families with incomes of $25,000 or more." This may give some indication of the community's tradition of commitment to performance as a goal (for students, teachers, the system as a whole) providing a context which requires or is favorable to evaluation. 2. "Percent of families with incomes less than $5,000." Federal and state support, higher in low income districts, usually requires evaluation which typically reports program results rather than emphasizes evaluation office participation in the instructioned change process.

Resource variables. Three resource variables are included. 1. "Evaluation office budget." This gives a measure of the total amount of money available to the unit; this may allow some inferences about economies of scale in terms of financing evaluation activities. 2. "Budget per

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*It should be remembered that the instructional renewal scale measures the number of (project-specified) instructional-related activities engaged in by the unit, it does not describe the unit's commitment to or priority of these activities; currently available data do not allow such a measure.

TABLE 1

Survey Items Forming Dependent Variable

Survey Item	Coding for Forming Instructional Renewal Scale
Activities	
1. Classroom observation	1 = engaged in activity 0 = does not participate
2. Identify/appraise educational goals or objectives	
3. Assist in the selection of instructional programs	
4. Check that implementation conforms to program specification	
5. Modify programs using evaluation results	
6. Participate in selection of curriculum/program materials	
Recommendations	
7. Recommend increased communication to teachers and principals about unit services and constraints	1 = recommended by evaluation head 0 = not mentioned
Time serving clients	
8. Percentage of time the evaluation office spends providing service to teachers or principals	1 = above respondent median of 29.6% 0 = below median
Use by clients of data generated by evaluation office	
9. Principals	1 = consistently use 0 = rarely or sometimes use
10. Teachers	

pupil." This is included as a resource measure standardized for district size; it indicates to some extent a district's commitment to the centralized evaluation function. 3. "Number of evaluation unit professional staff." This may indicate the depth and scope of the evaluation unit's instructional capability.

Formal organizational characteristics. Five variables represent formal organizational characteristics. 1. "District enrollment." This indicates whether the unit reports directly to the superintendent. 2. Evaluation units reporting relations to superintendent. 3. Location of evaluation unit in instruction/curriculum division. These data were derived from district organization charts. Note that these two locational variables are not mutually exclusive; that is for example, a unit located in the instructional division can also report directly to the superintendent (such as an "Associate Superintendent for Instruction: who is in charge of evaluation). 4. Involvement of the unit in other (besides evaluation district activities. This variable is a count of how many of the following activities were participated in by the unit: allocation of district funds, review of teacher performance, facilities planning, collective bargaining. 5. Evaluation head's previous teaching experience. This dichotomous variable indicates the congruence between the evaluation head and other instructional staff.

Informal organizational characteristics . Two informal organizational characteristics which could affect the communication and potential effectiveness of a unit are the amount of (1) job ambiguity and (2) conflict reported by the head of the evaluation unit. Job conflict and ambiguity scales were formed by summing the responses to relevant survey items,

based on those originally developed by Rizzo et al., 1970. Items were coded such that higher values indicate more conflict or ambiguity.

Results

Table 2 contains the means and standard deviations of the variables used in the analysis. The sample of 135 evaluation offices show a range of involvement in instructional renewal with scores ranging from 0 to 10 and a mean of 5.4. (See Figure 1.) The "average" unit has a budget of $172,600, representing expenditures of $4.51 per pupil. The sample of units are located in districts with an average of 17 percent of families with incomes under $5,000 and 6 percent with incomes of $25,000 or more. Thirty nine percent of these units report directly to the superintendent and 39 percent are located in the instructional or curriculum division. Slightly more than half of the heads of evaluation have been teachers. The directors report average levels of job conflict and ambiguity of 13.3 (on a scale of 6-24) and 9.1 (on a scale of 5-20), respectively considerably less than would be expected based on observations and discussions in districts during project fieldwork. Typically, these units are not involved with other district activities (outside evaluation); we see an average of less than one activity from the four possible. (See Table 2.)

Table 3 presents the correlations among these variables, and regression results are shown in Table 4. Twenty-eight percent of the variation in instructional renewal is explained by the specified group of independent variables. Three of the variables have coefficients significantly different from zero (at $p < .01$): budget per pupil, location in instruction/curriculum department and ambiguity. With all other variables held constant, (for example, for units located in instruction with similar amounts

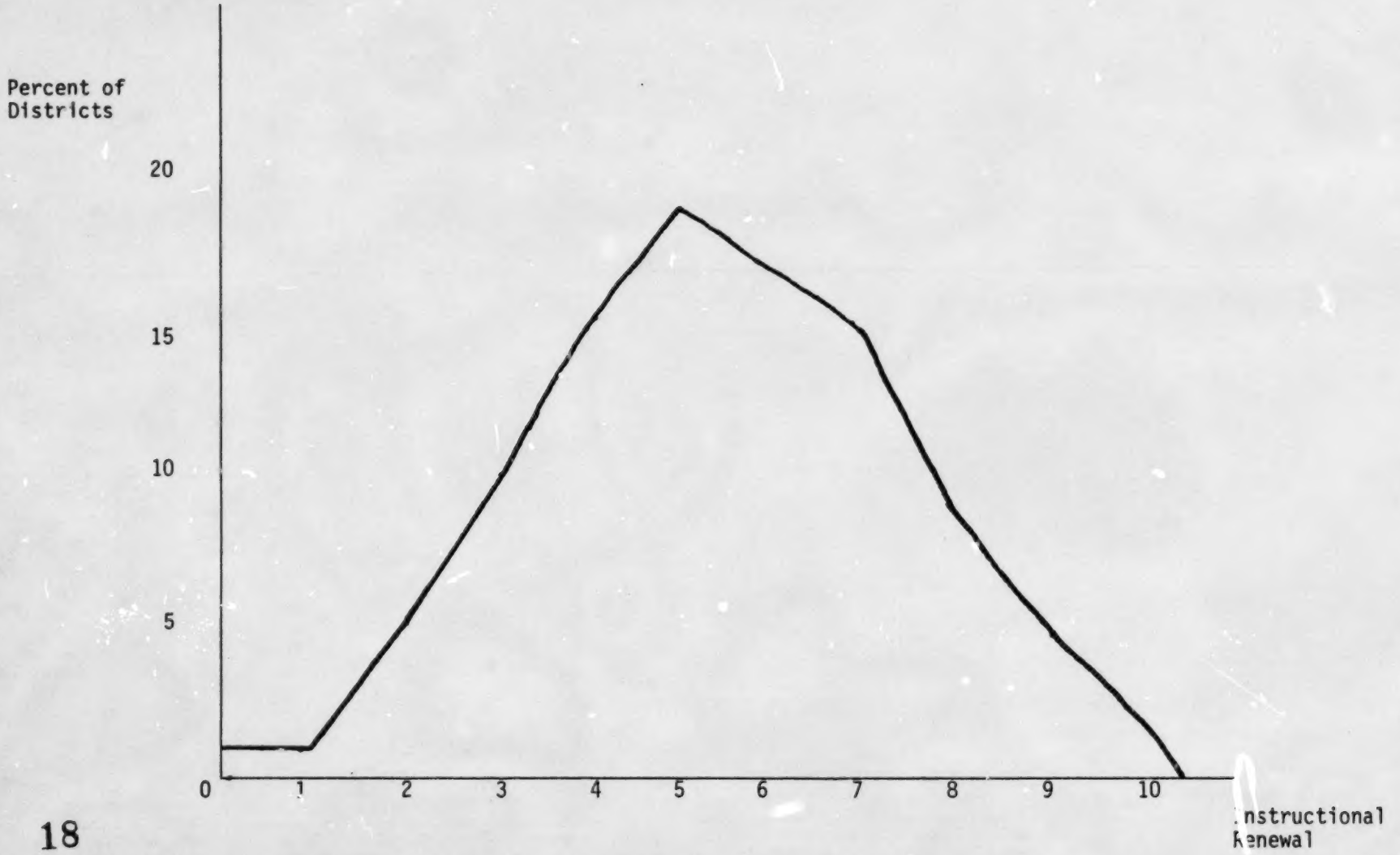
TABLE 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent and Independent Variable(s) (N=129)

Variable	Mean	S. D.
Instructional Renewal	5.44	2.10
Percent of families with income $25,000 or more (high income)	5.86%	5.30%
Percent of families with income less than $5,000 (low income)	16.70%	8.01%
Evaluation office budget (in thousands)	$172.60	$215.10
Evaluation office budget per pupil	$4.51	$3.36
Number of evaluation office professionals (unit size)	4.38	6.40
District enrollment (in thousands)	43.52	70.58
Reports to superintendent	0.39	0.49
Location in instruction	0.39	0.49
Other district activities	0.95	1.00
Teaching background	0.56	0.50
Job Conflict	13.28	3.95
Job Ambiguity	9.10	2.84

FIGURE 1

Frequency Distribution - Instructional Renewal



of ambiguity etc.) units spending more money per pupil are more involved in instructional renewal. Similarly, evaluation office heads reporting less job ambiguity and units located in the instruction/curriculum division participate more in instructional renewal. This finding that these three factors explain 28 percent of the variation, of course, leaves much unknown about the total picture of how evaluation units influence instructional renewal. However, the identifying of these three factors can help pin-point factors that should receive close scrutiny in subsequent research on this topic.

Percents of high and low income families each have small (non-significant) negative effects on level of instructional renewal involvement. This suggests that differences in needs or demands for evaluation are not substantially explained by differences in community income levels. However, attention should be given in future work to other specific measures of economic or political climate considering such things as integration and busing, bond and school board elections, board member recalls and parent involvement).

In terms of resources, total evaluation office budget and the number of evaluation office professionals have virtually no effect on level of involvement in instructional renewal (within the context of the proposed regression model); that is, the size of the budget in absolute terms and the size of the unit are not necessarily limiting factors. However, evaluation office expenditures per pupil explains the largest amount of variation in the dependent variable; that is, larger per pupil evaluation expenditures are associated with more involvement in instructional renewal among the sample districts. But the implications of this result for increasing evaluation unit involvement in instructional renewal must be viewed within a major constraint, i.e., improbability of future budget increases. Because budget increases are unlikely at present, evaluation offices could consider reallocation of existing resources, increased involvement of teachers and principals in the evaluation process, and use of data and other resources already available from other departments within the district.

TABLE 3

Correlations (N=135)

	% Low Income	$ High Income	Total Budget	$ Per Pupil	Unit Size	Dist. Enrollment	Reports to Superintendent	Location in Instruction	Other Dist. Activities	Teaching Background	Job Conflict	Job Ambiguity
Instructional Renewal	-.03	-.06	.13	.34*	.08	-.04	-.01	.11	.11	-.05	.06	-.27*
% Low Income Families		-.47*	.16	.08	.18	.08	-.03	-.07	.02	.12	.22*	-.12
% High Income Families			-.01	.09	-.04	.01	.03	-.03	-.04	-.10	-.20	.00
Total Budget				.40*	.87*	.76*	-.05	-.12	.03	.15	.12	-.14
$ Per Pupil					.34*	-.10	.19	-.17	.17	.08	-.02	-.17
Unit Size						.55*	-.06	-.09	.06	.14	.09	-.14
District Enrollment							-.14	-.01	-.04	.10	.08	-.04
Reports to Superintendent								-.45*	.13	-.03	-.10	-.04
Located in Instruction									-.19	.02	.02	.12
Other District Activities										-.03	.11	-.04
Teaching Background											.13	.05
Job Conflict												.32

*Significant at $\alpha \leq .01$

TABLE 4

Regression Results

Variable	Full Model: Regression Coefficient	Full Model: Standard Error	Stepwise Procedure Increase in Explained Variation
Budget per pupil	.191*	.084	.11
Job Ambiguity	-.225*	.064	.05
Location in instruction	.927*	.387	.04
Job Conflict	.087	.048	.02
% Low income families	-.044	.024	.01
% High income families	-.058	.036	.02
Teaching background	-.330	.337	.01
Other district activities	.129	.172	.00
Unit size	-.064	.061	.00
Total unit budget	.002	.003	.00
District enrollment	-.003	.006	.00
Reports to superintendent	.044	.388	.00

[a] $R^2 = .260$

$F_{12,122} = 3.57^*$

* Significant at $\alpha \leq .01$

Holding constant the remaining variables in the regression, the size of the district also has virtually no effect on a unit's involvement in instructional renewal. This again suggests that an evaluation office need not be inhibited (nor facilitated) by such factors essentially outside the control of the district or unit. While management needs of a larger district may be quite different from smaller ones, requiring different emphases in technical assistance, overall size does not differentiate evaluation focus.

The location of the evaluation office within the district organizational structure is an important predictor of involvement in instructional change. While the evaluation unit's location within the instructional division is important, the reporting relationship to the superintendent is not. It is interesting that whether an evaluation office reports directly to the superintendent appears not to have a significant effect; however, about one-third of the sample mention autonomy or reporting directly to the superintendent as an important issue for new units to consider.

Organizational proximity to the programs being evaluated appears to affect the actual evaluation activities and client relationships. The evaluation office head's previous teaching experience does not have a significant effect on instructional renewal. It may be more effective for a district to concentrate job requirements on technical and personal skills rather than certificates. The evaluation unit's participation in other (non-evaluation) district activities also has a non-significant coefficient.

Job ambiguity is negatively associated with the dependent variable. This finding is difficult to understand. We speculate that it is not likely that job ambiguity itself causes lower levels of instructional involvement; but rather that there are other characteristics, personalities, etc. within the district which cause both ambiguous job situations and reduced focus on the evaluation unit's involvement in instructional renewal.*

Job conflict has a slight (but not significant) positive relationship to instructional renewal. Thus with all other things held constant, evaluation office heads faced with incompatible job expectations can still be involved in instructional renewal; this suggests that personal commitment to instructional change takes precedence over conflicting job expectations.

The proposed regression model is a simple one which does not include indirect effects on instructional renewal and complex interrelationships among independent variables. For example, if we consider the three variables most directly measuring organizational size (district enrollment, total evaluation office budget, number of professionals in the evaluation office) separate from the other independent variables, we find that they account for approximately 9% of the variation in instructional renewal (a small, but statistically significant amount); regression coefficients are similar in direction but slightly stronger than those in Table 4, -.013, .007, -.109 for enrollment, budget and unit size, respectively. With a sound theoretical basis for proposing interrelationships among independent variables, a multiple indicator or other path model might be explored. Nevertheless, the simple model identifies issues which school districts and evaluation could consider and suggests that factors outside the control of school districts are not overwhelmingly important.

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* For a preliminary explanation of Role Conflict and Job Ambiguity of school district evaluation unit heads, see O. Grusky, "Contextual Factors Affecting Role Conflict and Ambiguity: A Study of District Evaluation Unit Heads" in Studies in Evaluation and Decision-Making, Center for the Study of Evaluation, 1979, 1-23.

Summary

Regression results identify three evaluation office characteristics which are significantly related to more involvement instructional renewal: higher evaluation unit per pupil expenditures, location within the district's instruction/curriculum division, lower job ambiguity for the evaluation head. Other factors were found not to be significantly related within the context of the proposed regression model: the SES level of the community, total unit budget, unit size and district size, reporting directly to the superintendent, whether the head of evaluation has had teaching experience, involvement of the unit in other (besides evaluation) district activities, and job conflict. While the set of independent variables account for a statistically significant amount of instructional renewal variation, in practical terms, there remains a large proportion (72 percent) of variation unexplained.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

The reader is reminded of the exploratory nature of this analysis. Many of the variables were constructed from survey data that were collected for essentially descriptive purposes. The validity of some of the items used and their relationships to instructional renewal are yet to be verified by other research methods. For example:

1. Some of the variables are based on the evaluation unit heads' perceptions of their units' functioning and effectiveness. We have found in preliminary field work that evaluation unit heads and teachers and other administrators often have widely differing opinions about the effectiveness and utility of their district's evaluation unit. Evaluation unit heads tend to be far more optimistic than teachers and administration when estimating their unit's impact in the district.

2. Evaluation units are typically engaged in many activities that result in evaluation or research reports, e.g., testing reports, enrollment projection, ethnic surveys and evaluation of instruction programs. So, when evaluation unit heads report that teachers and administrators are using the units' products we cannot, with this survey data, be certain of the proportion of the reports that acutally deal with instruction. Thus, data indicating teacher's and administrator's usage of the unit's work does not translate directly into influencing instructional renewal.

3. While there is reason to believe that the variables used in this analysis relate to instructional renewal there are likely school district dynamics, untapped through survey methods, that can profoundly effect the evaluation unit's influence. For example, the personal relationship between the evaluation unit head and the superintendent, or other relevant decision makers, can influence receptively the evaluation unit's work. The presence or immediacy of general trends, or unusual circumstances, e.g., court ordered desegreation or rapidly declining enrollments, can influence usage of evaluation unit reports. Also, recent local and site-specific events, such as previous evaluation reports that were poorly designed or badly perceived can lower client confidence in the unit's present work and thereby reduce utilization.

4. The availability of timely and well executed evaluation reports, while an important step in instructional renewal, do not guarantee implementation cf new or reformed programs. The planning and execution of an effective change program and strategy is, of course, a vital and complex process. The extent to which these processes were being utilized in these districts was not examined in this research study.

At least partial solutions to the research problems listed above can be achieved by using other methodologies, e.g., extensive field work, in conjunction with more quantitative methods. We believe that future progress in examining the ways in which evaluation units influence school district's instructional decision-making can best be achieved through this combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. To that end the Center for the Study of Evaluation has undertaken a program of field studies in school districts to examine first hand those characteristics and dynamics that relate to the districts utilizing evaluation unit work in reforming the instructional program. These field studies will utilize the findings of this analyses in guiding the study's conceptualization and data collection; the field work, conversely, will be used to test some of the findings emerging from this study.

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